

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday December 7, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

Honoring 1 TIMOTHY GOD

HONORING GOD
A Controversial Passage – Part 2
“Worship, Women and Wrangling”
1 Timothy 2:9-15

Getting to Know Timothy Facts:

- (1) **The name Timothy means “one who honors God”** – Hence the name of our study “Honoring God.” Timothy received his name, which means “one who honors God,” from his mother (Eunice) and grandmother (Lois), devout Jews who became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 1:5) and taught Timothy the Old Testament Scriptures from his childhood (2 Tim. 3:15). His father was a Greek (Acts 16:1) who may have died before Timothy met Paul
- (2) **Timothy was from the town of Lystra** - Timothy was from Lystra (Acts 16:1-3), a city in the Roman province of Galatia (part of modern day Turkey).



- (3) **Timothy came to know Jesus through Paul during his first missionary journey** - Paul led Timothy to Christ (1 Timothy 1:2; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 1:2), undoubtedly during his ministry in Lystra on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-23).
- (4) **Paul recruited Timothy to join his ministry team during Paul's second missionary journey** - When Paul revisited Lystra on his second missionary journey, Paul chose Timothy to accompany him (Acts 16:1-3).
- (5) **Timothy was likely a teenager when he first joined Paul's ministry team** - Although Timothy was very young (probably in his late teens or early twenties, since about 15 years later Paul referred to him as a young man, 1 Timothy 4:12), he had a reputation for godliness (Acts 16:2).
- (6) **Timothy was with Paul throughout the rest of Paul's life and ministry** - Timothy was to be Paul's disciple, friend, and co-laborer for the rest of the apostle's life, ministering with him in Berea (Acts 17:14), Athens (Acts 17:15), Corinth (Acts 18:5, 2 Corinthians 1:19), and accompanying him on his trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). He was with Paul in his first Roman imprisonment and went to Philippi (Philippians 2:19-23) after Paul's release. In addition, Paul frequently mentions Timothy in his epistle (Romans 16:21; 2 Corinthians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1).
- (7) **Timothy became the pastor of the church at Ephesus** - Paul often sent Timothy to churches as his representative (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 16:10; Philippians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:2), and 1 Timothy finds him on another assignment, serving as pastor of the church at Ephesus (1 Thessalonians 1:3).

"⁸ I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; ⁹ in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, ¹⁰ but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. ¹¹ Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. ¹² And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. ¹⁵ Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control. " – 1 Timothy 2:8-15 (NKJV)

Let's think again about his passage for a minute... just the casual reading of it, and an initial hearing of it. How do you respond to that passage? For discussion respond to these questions:

- *What is your initial response?*
- *Why do you think this passage might be extremely controversial (especially in our day)?*
- *Do you think it is important for Christians and the church today to really understand this passage? Why*

How should women conduct themselves in church worship and what is their role in the church? Let me remind you of three important thoughts to keep in minds as we continue to unpack this difficult passage in 1 Timothy 2

3 Important Reminders for 1 Timothy 2:

- (1) **Remember this is one of the most controversial subjects in Christian doctrine -** People have looked at our text (in 1 Timothy 2:9-15) and called Paul a chauvinist. Others declare that this text is cultural or specific to the church in Ephesus and therefore has no bearing on church worship today. There are problems with both of the extremes, and the truth is an accurate understanding and interpretation of this passage probably lies some between these two rather extreme views.
- (2) **If we believe Scripture is inspired and have a high view Scripture then we must accept that this is not Paul's opinion -** Remember Paul's words a little later in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, *"¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* ... including even the ones that we "don't like," or don't understand, or that seem to contradict what we think or believe (or current culture teaches). *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..."* It is Divine. So the key is not to throw it out, but to understand it and try to correctly interpret it and get at the heart of what God is saying through His inspired word... even with a difficult passage like this one that may apparently cut across current and conventional thinking.
- (3) **This passage is for more than just the culture of that day -** As for saying this text only applies to the church of Ephesus, the problem with that is Paul says similar things to Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:34) and the church at Crete (Titus 1:5-9). What Paul teaches cannot be easily dismissed. And remember that that though much of Scripture was cultural and applied to that day, it still has application and relevance for us today... even controversial passages like this one still speak. But what is it saying to us today? That is what we must try to get at in our day.

Which of these is this passage for?

SOME RELATED SCRIPTURE TO CONSIDER:

Also, lest we think this is an anomaly in Scripture, this is not a lone rogue passage. Paul says similar things elsewhere. As well there are some related Scripture that may be wise to get in our head. The subject of women, women in worship and the role of women was something Paul spoke of on several occasions.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 – *"³⁴ Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. ³⁵ And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church."*

Titus 2:3-4 – *“³ The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— ⁴ that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children.”*

Ephesians 5:22-23 – *“²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.”*

Galatians 3:28 – *“²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

Genesis 2:18 – *“¹⁸ And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’”*

1 Corinthians 11:3 – *“³ But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”*

1 Timothy 3:2 – *“² A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach.”*

Though there is room to agree to disagree on this topic, we must all agree that understanding it and its ramifications are important.

The context of our passage in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 is public worship (see 1 Timothy 3:15) and particularly women’s role in worship. If one studies worship throughout Scripture, one can clearly see how meticulous God is about worship offered to him. He gave detailed instructions to the priests and the Levites about how to offer acceptable sacrifices and festivals to him. We see several people killed or disciplined in the Old Testament because they did not follow God’s instructions for worship.

In John 4:23, Jesus said to the woman at the well that God desires worshipers who worship in spirit and truth. Spirit refers to the heart of the worship and truth refers to alignment with scriptural truths. God doesn’t accept all worship. He rejected Cain’s offering because it didn’t come with a right heart (Genesis 4). He rejected King Uzziah’s offering as he usurped the role of the priest—his worship didn’t align with truth (2 Chronicles 26). Again, though we can agree to disagree about the role of women in worship, we must all agree that it is important. God desires worshipers who worship in spirit and truth. To have a right heart in worship is not enough; our worship must align with scriptural regulations.

Therefore, as we study this text, we learn more about how to offer worship that is pleasing to the Lord. The instructions in this text, though written about women, are relevant for all worshipers: How should women conduct themselves in public worship? What is the role of women in worship? How can we worship God in spirit and in truth?

Again his is one of the most controversial subjects in Christian doctrine... it hard, and it is hard to get your head around and at times it almost doesn't make sense (especially in our more modern minds). We mentioned these last time, but just for review here are the two prominent view of this controversial subject of the women in the church...

FOR REVIEW

2 important terms that you need to be acquainted with: *These two terms and some understanding of them is important, especially given the climate of our day and the controversy surrounding the issue of women's roles in the church today. These two terms represent are two views used to describe the role of women in the church.*

1. **Complementarianism** – *A simple definition: Complementarianism is the view that women are limited regarding leadership roles in the church (such as elder/pastor or deacon). The complementarian view agrees that men and women are equal in Christ, yet that God has specified different roles for men and women regarding church leadership. This view is based on several details found in 1 Timothy 2, 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. These include the use of exclusively male pronouns related to elders, that elders are to be the husband of one wife (something only a man could do), and that no examples exist of a female elder/pastor in the New Testament. The complementarian view finds the most biblical support, as the case for a female elder/pastor is one that must be made from silence. The Bible just doesn't ever give or cite an example of a female elder or pastor (there is not biblical precedent).*
2. **Egalitarianism** – *A simple definition: Egalitarianism is the view that women can serve in all forms of church leadership, including ordination as pastors. The egalitarian view is based on the biblical view that men and women are both one in Christ... which is true. For example, Galatians 3:28 states, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The weakness of this view, however, is in dealing with the New Testament passages that define the requirements of elders and seemingly specific roles of women in 1 Timothy 2:9-15, 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The egalitarian view often refers to and cites examples such as Junia in Romans 16:7, who is sometimes viewed as being called an apostle (though not all agree to this interpretation), Phoebe as a deacon in Romans 16:1 (though the general title of servant is more likely), and to the four daughters of Philip in Acts 21:9 who prophesied. If there were female apostles, deacons, and prophets, it is argued, then why could there not be female elders/pastors? Again, this argument is an argument from silence. Even the parallel examples of female deacons and apostles are disputed, though 1 Timothy 3:11 may possibly speak of female deacons (literally*

"women" or likely the wives of the deacons). As a result, the most likely interpretation is that women were not elders/pastors in the New Testament and that this teaching was one that extends to today.

While there are Christians who hold to both views, a look at the biblical evidence shows a stronger/higher likelihood that the complementarian view is more accurate. The focus of this argument is ultimately not the value of men versus women, but to God's roles for church leadership under the ultimate leadership of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3). Jesus is the head of the church and the elders of the church serve under Him to lovingly shepherd the flock of God.

CAUTIONS AGAINST USING THIS PASSAGE WRONGLY (against women)

Hundreds of pages have been written on this passage (1 Timothy 2:5-9) and others like it, with almost as many interpretations, proving this to be one of the least understood and most contested passages of all time. In spite of the lack of consensus and obvious translation difficulties, many Christians continue to cite portions of 1 Timothy 2 as the foundation for beliefs that are sometimes hurtful to women and undercut their work and ministry in the church. At other times passages like this one have caused division, dissensions, splits within churches and even denominations. To the other extreme passage like this have cause a serious reaction resulting in the water-down of God's Word and the infusion of liberalism and un-biblical cultural relevance in the church.

Reasons to Interpret this Passage with Caution:

- (1) **Complexity with translating words like "authority," and more** – The Greek words translated simply as "Authority" is a poor translation of the Greek word Paul uses in 1 Timothy 2:12, "¹² *And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.*" The Greek word Paul used for "authority" in this passage (authentein) is so unusual compared to his other references to authority that he could not possibly have been talking about normative church leadership structures. The words "authentein" always referred to an "abuse of authority." It is disappointing that even though the most recent credible scholarship confirms that in Paul's time "authentein" referred to an "abuse of authority," that this distinction is often not communicated in study seeking to accurately interpret this passage. Other in this passage pose some interpretation problems. The word translated as "silence" and "submission" pose some issues. We will look at these a little later in the study.
- (2) **Consistency with hermeneutics in interpretation** - Biblical hermeneutics is the study of the principles and methods of interpreting the text of the Bible. 2 Timothy 2:15 commands believers to be involved in hermeneutics, "¹⁵ *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" The purpose of biblical hermeneutics is to help us to know how to properly interpret, understand, and apply the Bible

3 Basic Principles of Hermeneutics:

- 1. The Bible should be interpreted literally** – The most important law of biblical hermeneutics is that the Bible should be interpreted literally. We are to understand the Bible in its normal or plain meaning, unless the passage is obviously intended to be symbolic or if figures of speech are employed. The Bible says what it means and means what it says. For example, when Jesus speaks of having fed “the five thousand” in Mark 8:19, the law of hermeneutics says we should understand *five thousand* literally—there was a crowd of hungry people that numbered five thousand who were fed with real bread and fish by a miracle-working Savior. Any attempt to “spiritualize” the number or to deny a literal miracle is to do injustice to the text and ignore the purpose of language, which is to communicate. Some interpreters make the mistake of trying to read between the lines of Scripture to come up with esoteric meanings that are not truly in the text, as if every passage has a hidden spiritual truth that we should seek to decrypt. Biblical hermeneutics keeps us faithful to the intended meaning of Scripture and away from allegorizing Bible verses that should be understood literally.
- 2. The Bible should be interpreted historically, grammatically, and contextually** – A second crucial law of biblical hermeneutics is that passages must be interpreted historically, grammatically, and contextually. Interpreting a passage historically means we must seek to understand the culture, background, and situation that prompted the text. For example, in our passage it is impossible to correctly interpret a controversial and difficult passage like 1 Timothy 2:9-15 without interpreting it historically in its context of the day, grammatically (as already discussed with the words translated as “authority”), and even contextually. There is no doubt that Paul was contextually writing to Timothy, the pastor of a troubled Ephesian church with many problems not the least of which was false teachers. That itself informs the passage we are looking at. Another example of this hermeneutical principle is that in order to fully understand Jonah’s flight in Jonah 1:1–3, we should research the history of the Assyrians as related to Israel. Interpreting a passage grammatically requires one to follow the rules of grammar and recognize the nuances of Hebrew and Greek. For example, when Paul writes of “our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” in Titus 2:13, the rules of grammar state that *God* and *Savior* are parallel terms and they are both in apposition to *Jesus Christ*—in other words, Paul clearly calls Jesus “our great God.” Interpreting a passage contextually involves considering the context of a verse or passage when trying to determine the meaning. The context includes the verses immediately preceding and following, the chapter, the book, and, most broadly, the entire Bible. For example, many puzzling statements in Ecclesiastes become clearer when kept in context—the book of Ecclesiastes is written from the earthly perspective “under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:3). In fact, the phrase *under the sun* is repeated about thirty times in the book, establishing the context for all that is “vanity” in this world.

3. The Bible should be interpreted in light of other Scripture – A third law of biblical hermeneutics is that Scripture is always the best interpreter of Scripture. The best commentary on Scripture is Scripture. For this reason, we always compare Scripture with Scripture when trying to determine the meaning of a passage.

Recommended helps of interpreting Scripture: a good Study Bible (Life Application Study Bible, ESV Study Bible, MacArthur Study Bible), a good Bible Dictionary (Smith's Bible Dictionary, Nelson's, Eerdmans', Holman's), a Bible Concordance (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, Young's Analytical Concordance), a good Cross Reference System (many Bibles have a cross reference system in them, but here are a couple you can get, The Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge, Nelson's Cross Reference Guide to the Bible). Many of these Bible helps for interpreting Scripture can not be found online for free.

So with that in mind, let's think about our passage. Applying 1 Timothy 2:12, "¹² *And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence,*" literally but not doing the same for the surrounding verses 9-15 (especially vv.11-12), or even in light of the whole of Paul's letter to Timothy, or in light of the original language in which it was written, or the original context and things going on in the church. How else can we accurately apply it to our current situation if we don't know the situation in which it was written. To take a passage like this and apply it across the boards to all women, for all time in all circumstances would be suspect at least and perhaps shoddy hermeneutics. With rare exceptions, no one teaches that women should be silent or quiet in church or that women can't talk at all at church. What does it say about the integrity of your biblical interpretation if you single this one verse out and disregard those around it?

- (3) **Historical context of the letter to Timothy and issues in that church** - Paul's restriction was given in the context of a personal letter to Timothy giving advice about a specific issue in the church at Ephesus. There is no command from God here, and no suggestion that Paul was establishing church policy for all time. There is no mention of this in the rest of Paul's writings, or anywhere else in the Bible for that matter. You don't have to dig very far to understand why this suggestion was made; it's evident in Paul's discussion of false teaching in chapter one. (Bob Edwards has written more about the issue of false teaching in Ephesus here.)
- (4) **The seeming contradiction of this passage with other passages (and Paul's own words)** - Using this passage to restrict women seemingly requires elevating a handful of verses over the rest of Paul's writing, not to mention the entire New Testament. When you read all of Paul's letters and the Book of Acts in one sitting, it is apparent that Paul supported the role of women in the early New Testament church. We see this in a number of churches, including Philippi, Thessalonica, Cenchrae, and Rome. It seems somewhat inconsistent to give such weight to the 1 Timothy 2 passage when many other portions of Scripture seem to support the role of women in the church and even sometimes apparently leading out.

(5) **The problem of applying the passage in a consistent and logical way** - It seems churches find it impossible to put 1 Timothy 2:12 into practice in a consistent or logical way. I think that is why we find such controversy and difficulty with this passage and the issue. There is wide discrepancy in how 1 Timothy 2:12 is applied. I've observed that in some churches women can do everything but hold the position of senior pastor. In other churches women can't even teach a mixed gender high school Sunday school class. One well recognized Biblical theologian and scholar (Wayne Grudem) even has an article entitled "But What Should Women Do in the Church?" that categorizes 83 things women can and cannot do in the church, demonstrating how challenging and difficult in applications this passage can become.

These and other issues seem to warn us to proceed with caution when interpreting and applying this passage today. People (especially women) can be deeply wounded over how we handle this issue. Questions abound. This just indicates some of why this is such a difficult issue and passage to interpret... and why we should proceed with caution as well as grace and kindness, Christian understanding and consideration toward one another.

WOMEN IN WORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Let's look at our passage again, in context. We are going to be focusing on verses 11-12, but I want to look at this controversial passage in it's context. Look at it with me...

⁹ In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, ¹⁰ but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. ¹¹ Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. ¹² And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. ¹⁵ Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control. ” – 1 Timothy 2:9-15 (NKJV)

Here are the difficult words we want to focus on this evening that seem so troubling... **verses 11-12, “¹¹ Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. ¹² And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.”**

Let me give you some initial observation that need to be made about these two verses... just really from what they state. These may be some things that are overlooked because we get so caught up in the perceived negatives of these two verses...

Some Initial General Observations: (1 Timothy 2:11-12)

(1) **Women were to be allowed to learn** – **“Let a woman learn...”** Don't overlook the significance and revolutionary idea for the ancient New Testament world. There may be

perceived cautions and apparent prohibits in these verses and perhaps it is communicating some things women weren't permitted to do, but it is clearly communicating that women should not be shut out of the learning process. A new and novel notion. The form of the Greek verse translated "**let... learn**" is an imperative (command) in the Greek. Paul is commanding that women be taught in the church. It should never be that women are That was a novel concept, since neither first century Judaism nor Greek culture held women in high esteem.

- (2) **What we perceive as a negative may simply be communicating to us how to be a good learner** – In other words we have perceived this verse to be negative, when in fact it may be very positive. Women were not being welcome (even commanded) to be allowed to learn and taught and were give instruction on how best to be a good learner... how to really learn. We would view the words "**in silence**" and "**submission**" negatively through out 21st century Western mind-set, but in the 1st century New Testament world not so. Women of that day would have perceived this verse with great freedom and liberation. They were being allowed to learn and told how best to do it. Listen to it in **verse 11, "¹¹Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.**" The verse is communicating how a "woman" (and you and I) can learn... be a good learner/student... how we may be teachable. Similarly James, the half-brother of Jesus, tell us in **James 1:19, "¹⁹Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath.**" Sound very similar to learn in silence and submission! The wise writer of Proverbs said in **Proverbs 17:28, "²⁸Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.**" "Silence" ("quiet") and "submission" ("to line up under") were to characterize the role of a woman as a learner (in other words be teachable... you can't learn, be taught, be teachable if you don't quiet down and hear and line up under what is being taught) in the context of the church assembly.
- (3) **Paul was likely addressing a real situation in the church at Ephesus especially in verse 12** – **Verse 12** and, "¹²**And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.**" So Paul may have been saying something like this (this totally subjective), "I know a woman (or some women), influenced and enticed by false teachers may be causing a problem in the church, but "let women learn" who are willing to be taught (teachable, they listen, they received, they adjust/submit their life to what they are taught)... don't throw out the baby with the bath water, let the women who truly want to learn and are teachable learn, and don't permit/allow those who just want to spout false ideas and the false teachers ideas to have a voice in the church." That is at least a possibility of the reasoning here. Another thought is that learning and being taught was a new phenomenon for 1st century women... neither Judaism nor Greek culture allowed it. Only men had been allowed to study and learn, and often only men even knew how to read and write... so the women were at a great disadvantage. They need to opportunity to learn and would not yet have developed the disciple to teach what they didn't know well. "**I do not permit**" The Greek word for "permit" is used in the New Testament to refer to allowing someone to do what he desires. Paul may have been addressing a real situation in which a women (or several women) in Ephesus desire to be

public teachers possibly influenced from what they had been taught by the false teachers who had infiltrated Ephesus. We aren't sure what these false teachers were but they were likely something like the Galatian Judaizers... teaching that salvation was possible through works. This would have been an especially dangerous false teaching for the early New Testament church, like Ephesus.

I mentioned it last week (as a bit of teaser), but notice the change in verses 9-10 from the plural reference to "women," to the singular reference to "a woman" in verses 11-12. Beginning at verse 11 and again in 12, we see a shift from plural "women" to the singular "a woman." Why? Also, how does it tie into the instruction for "a woman" to receive instruction with entire submissiveness (v. 11), and that "a woman" is not to teach or exercise authority over "a man" (v. 12)? Answering these questions has generated a lot of debate and a lot of opinions about this passage. Let's take a look at the main ones... these are the three main and accepted interpretations of this passage and may have implications on how we read this passage but also how to apply it.

3 Commonly Held Interpretations/Views of the "Woman" in 1 Timothy 2: (in 1 Timothy 2:11-12)

(1) The woman in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is a specific individual Paul had in mind, but he did not name her – One of the interpretations given to these two verses is that there was a particular married woman who had been deceived (as Eve was deceived), was believing false teachings, was ignorant of the truth, and had been teaching false things to her husband. Even though she was a fallacious teacher, she was being shown mercy because of her ignorance just as Paul said he was shown mercy due to his ignorance as he mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:13, *"Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."*

Some say that to maintain this position you have to read it into the text. It says absolutely nothing about "this woman" being deceived in ignorance. It isn't there, but we do know that false teachers, of whom Paul warns Timothy, had infiltrated the church at Ephesus.. one of Paul's many reasons for writing this letter to Timothy, the pastor.

Also, there isn't anything prior to this text that would imply there was a woman who was deceived. Though if there were false teachers, and Paul was concerned, and evident Timothy was too, it is likely that some were being drawn away by the false teaching. Still, there is nothing in the previous context to suggest that there is a woman who has been sincerely deceived and is ignorant of proper doctrines and had been teaching her husband false ideas. This view certainly has its credibility, but it also has a few problems, mostly it is based in subjectivity and may involve some reading into the text and between the lines.

The Nature of the False Teachers in Ephesus

If we jump ahead a bit we can see that false teachers were a definite issue in Ephesus and even that it was affecting the women. In **2 Timothy 3:6-7** Paul begins to deal with the sorts of false teachers who are present in Ephesus. (*Maybe read 2 Timothy 3:1-9*) Notice it, (2 Timothy 3:6-7, *"⁶ For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."*)

Paul is not describing generic sinful people here, rather these are people in the churches in Ephesus who are in a state of rebellion against the scripture and are behaving in ways that deny the power of godliness... false teachers who have crept in. It appears (from verses 6-7) that the false teachers in Ephesus target women. While Timothy is command to have nothing to do with these men, it appears that some woman are unnaturally attracted to them. The women are described as weak-willed (sometimes, "weak and silly women"). This is a moral weakness, not intellectual, they are predisposed to follow these leaders. **Implied is the idea that perhaps the false teachers are manipulating these**

women in order to gain power in the congregations. What is more, they are *"loaded down with sins."* The verb has the sense of "heaped up," overloaded, etc. "They are "swayed by evil desire" Paul describes these women as "always learning," probably with the sense that they are always looking for new and unique ideas, but they never get around to the truth!

The impression here is of a group of (perhaps) wealthy patrons of local elders. They are married (the false teachers sneak into the household), and are perhaps older, with more free time to play the patron for philosophers or teachers. This did occur in the ancient world, perhaps these women are treating Christian teachers in the same way they might treat a Greco-Roman philosopher.

Paul uses an fairly obscure analogy for the false teachers in Ephesus, Jannes and Jambres (verses 8-9). These names do not appear in the Hebrew Bible, but according to both Jewish and Christian tradition, these are the names of the two magicians who opposed Moses in Ex 7:11, 9:11. Jannes is mentioned in the *Damascus Document* 5:18, both appear in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Ex 7:11. Origen, *Against Celsus* 4.51 claims there is a (now lost) work describing the two men, although the spelling of the name varies. Citing legendary bad examples in comparison to the opponents to the gospel is not unique to Paul. Both 2 Peter and Jude list a series of bad examples in order to describe their own opponents. In this case the emphasis is likely on their opposition to the truth rather than on their use of occult.

That the false teachers are opposing the truth is called folly, and like Jannes and Jambres, they will not be able to stand up to the truth in the end. Is this name-calling? Not really,

it is an argument from analogy. Since the false teachers in Ephesus are “foolish” in a biblical sense, they cannot overcome the truth. Can this strategy be used to deal with the sorts of “false doctrine” we encounter today?

This support the idea that these false teacher were having an influence on the women in the church at Ephesus and that this was perhaps causing quite a problem... maybe even a big one.

- (2) **The woman in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is generically referring to wives and “a man” is generically referring to husbands.** – Another interpretation offered concerning 1 Timothy 2:12 is to say that the Greek words “gyne” (woman) and “andros” (man) mean wife and husband. This would render the verse as, *“But I do not allow a wife to teach or exercise authority over a husband, but to remain quiet.”* (1 Tim. 2:12).

There are some problems with this view. In **verse 11, “a woman”** is the Greek gyne, γυνή (nominative case¹). Basically, the nominative case is the subject of a sentence and often, but not always, has the word “the” in front of it, i.e., *“the woman.”* Here, in verse 11, the definite article “the” is not written in Greek; but we often insert it when translating to English so that English is properly constructed. The exact Greek spelling γυνή, gyne occurs 73 times in the Nestle Aland 26th Edition Greek N.T. It is translated as both “woman” and “wife”... depending on the context. In **verse 12, “a woman”** is the Greek γυναίκι, gunaiki, (dative case²). That exact spelling occurs 15 times in the N.T. and is also translated as both “woman” and “wife” depending on the context. Following is a chart of 18 Bible versions and how they translate gyne (v. 11) and gunaiki (v. 12).

BIBLE VERSION	1 Timothy 2:11	1 Timothy 2:12
Darby, ASV, ESV, HCSB, ISV, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, WNT, WORREL, YLT 😊	“a woman”	“a woman”
KJV 😊	“the woman”	“a woman”
NLT, NLV 😊	“women	“woman”
RSV, NRSV 😊	“a woman”	“woman”
GNB (Good New) 😞	“women”	“them”

As you can see, the translations differ slightly; but none of them translate either word as “wife.” Of course, this doesn’t mean it can’t be a wife and husband, but we have to ask why the translations don’t show that?

So, there is little dispute about verses 9 and 10 where Paul tells women to be modestly dressed and do good works. It is 11 to 15 where differing opinions are generated.

Let's just assume for a minute that the verses are about a married woman (even though we can see that none our English translation read that way). The word "quiet" in verse 12 is the Greek word translated at "quiet" is "hesuchia" (it's not usual word for quiet, "sigao"). It is important because if the verses are about a woman teaching false things to her husband, then shouldn't Paul tell her to stop doing it completely? The word for "quiet" in verse 12 where Paul instructs "this particular woman" to remain quiet is "hesuchia" which mean to be subdued, to be quite but not necessarily completely silent, where as "sigao" mean to be completely quite, not sound at all, complete silence. "Hesuchia" is used only four times in the NT, and again it means to be subdued, to be quiet and but not necessarily completely silent. Whereas, "sigao" used nine times int eh NT. Think about this... if it is an individual woman Paul had in mind who was teaching false things and Paul told her to be "quiet," is he telling her to speak her false doctrines a little more quietly (hesuchia) instead of remaining completely silent (sigao)? Does that make any sense?

Also, the word "teach" is from didasko (to teach) and not heterodidaskaleo (to teach falsely). Heterodidaskaleo is used two times in the New Testament—both in 1 Timothy. 1 Timothy 1:3, *"As I urged you when I went into Macedonia – remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine."* 1 Timothy 6:3, *"If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness."* So, if Paul is referring to a certain woman in our passage in 1 Timothy 2:12 who is teaching false doctrine, then why does he not use the word "heterodidaskaleo" (false teaching) when referring to her teaching and why doesn't he use "sigao" which means to be completely quiet? It doesn't seem to make sense posing a problem for this view that may, indeed, may this view the most questionable.

- (3) **The woman in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is representative of all women as "a man" represents all men** – This is the more "Complementarian" view, and perhaps viewed as the traditional view, and most commonly held view... or some form or version of it. Notice our verses again in verses 11-12, *"¹¹ Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. ¹² And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence."* This view holds that Paul is speaking here about the church, not the home (although, as mentioned, women are to be subject to their husbands in the home).

An important side note...

It is significant that Paul directs the women to learn. In the Jewish culture, they were not able to go to school to learn the Torah. But Paul wants women to learn as long as their attitude is marked by two qualities: "quietness" and "submissiveness." The word

translated “quietly” doesn’t mean absolute silence, but rather to have inner tranquility or peace (see 2:2). Women are not to be agitated, assertive rebel-rousers in the church. “Submissiveness” is a military word, meaning under in rank. A lieutenant and a sergeant are equal in personhood, but different in rank. Even so, women are to put themselves in rank under men in church leadership. Paul adds the words, “in entire” (submissiveness) to show that it is more than mere outward obedience; the attitude of respect is included. The implied object of their submission is church leaders (elders) who teach sound doctrine.

The word translated “exercise authority” is used only here in the New Testament and has the nuance of usurping authority or being domineering (abusing authority). Apparently some of the Ephesian women had taken a seminar on assertiveness training and were applying it by teaching even the men in the worship assembly. Paul is prohibiting this since, as he shows (2:13-14), it violates God’s pattern of authority and submission as pictured in creation and the fall.

I realize that Paul opens a host of questions which he leaves unanswered. Can women teach men in a home Bible study (remember, the early church met in homes)? What about Sunday School classes (or “Precept”)? What about the role of women in “para-church” ministries? Can they be in leadership positions over men? What about a woman teaching as long as she is in submission to male elders? What about a woman teaching through writing books or teaching a man individually (as Priscilla and Aquila did with Apollos [[Acts 18:26](#)])? What about all the noteworthy exceptions in Scripture (Deborah, Huldah, Junia, etc.)? What about the many godly and effective women missionaries down through church history?

I can’t begin to answer all those questions for this view... I think there are nuances to this view and that is a part of what make this such hard and controversial subject! But I can give several principles that apply to the church.

[1] First, the office of elder is limited to men (1 Tim. 3:1-7 & Titus 1:5-9 assume male elders, and in every N.T. instance elders are men; also, Jesus chose men as apostles with authority over the church). This means that the office of teaching elder (1 Tim. 5:17) is restricted to men.

[2] The Greek word for “teach” is used almost 100 times in the New Testament, and in only three instances does it refer to teaching individuals (Roy Zuck, cited by Ann L. Bowman, “Monograph” from the International School of Theology, “Women in Ministry: An Exegetical Study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” p. 4, footnote 21). So Paul probably had in mind situations where women taught the entire church.

[3] Is Paul giving one prohibition (a woman should not teach men in a domineering way) or two (a woman should not teach men nor should she do anything else to exercise authority over men)? The Greek grammar indicates that Paul intends two distinct and yet

closely related commands (Bowman, p. 5, footnote 31): A woman should not teach men, nor should she do anything else to exercise authority over men.

[4] So does Paul mean that a godly woman can never teach men? Then how do we explain God's manifest blessing on women missionaries who have evangelized, planted the church, and taught whole cultures of men and women? We need to be careful not to put God in our doctrinal boxes. He is notorious for doing as He pleases. The many noteworthy exceptional women in Scripture tell us to be careful here. But the exceptions as well as the plain teaching of passages such as our text show us that the exceptions are just that.

[5] The norm should be men in leadership and teaching positions in the church. If God raises up a gifted woman, we ought to recognize her ministry. But even so, she will have an attitude of submission to male leadership. And, she will focus on teaching women. I think Elisabeth Elliot is a modern example of such a gifted woman.

For a more detailed look at this passage please see my paper on "Should women be leaders in the church?"

1. Paul did not just follow culture, he wanted the women to learn – Throughout the Bible women are given a much higher position than was common in society at that time. Paul's first instruction that the women were to "learn" (1 Timothy 2:11 NIV) was radical in itself. Learning and receiving an education was considered unfit for women. Yet Paul specifically allows them to join church activities and receive instruction on an equal basis as the men. In Ephesians Paul commands husbands to "love [their] wives, just as Christ loved the church" (Ephesians 5:25 NASB). Again, in that society it would have been almost unheard of that a husband needed to love, respect, and take care of his wife to this extent. Extra-biblical literature written at that time period contains virtually no such injunctions. Paul also pronounced that women and men were equal in the body of Christ (Galatians 3:28), a concept totally foreign to the culture of his day! Jesus went against culture by forgiving the adulteress and letting her go free. In addition several of His closer-in followers were women, like Mary Magdalene, Martha, and Mary (sister of Martha). His resurrection was first made known to women, who were to spread the good news (showing that it is proper for women to spread the gospel).

All of the disciples were considered virtual rebels by leaders of their respective cultures. Eleven of the twelve died for their un-orthodox teachings. These men were not afraid to go against culture. They were even said to have "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6 NKJV). Therefore Paul's teachings on women's roles were not based on the culture's influence on him. They were based on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He supported a high role and position for women, one that was equal to that of men, but not exactly the same.

2. Is this command cultural? – Many argue that these instructions were cultural, intended only for the church at Ephesus. In verse thirteen of chapter two, however, Paul explicitly gives God’s creation order as the basis for this commandment. If he gave this instruction because of a unique situation at Ephesus, he almost surely would have given that as the reason for his prohibition against women teachers, not creation! Verse fourteen clarifies this even further. He shows that the fall is a direct result of God’s natural order being reversed.

Critics often point to two possibly cultural commands in the preceding verses to demonstrate that the prohibition against women teachers was also cultural. Those two commands were for men to lift “up holy hands” (verse 8) and for women to not braid their hair or wear gold and pearls (verse 9). It is true that those commands were probably related to culture. However, for both commands a universal principle was given that transcends all cultures. For prayer and lifting up hands the principle was to do so without “wrath and disention” (verse 9). Therefore the attitude of worship was the key point, not the outward style, which differs from time to time. In reference to clothing and style Paul lays out the universal principle of exercising proper behavior and godliness that should guide women’s actions, as opposed to concern for beauty. But there is no other universal principle mentioned in regards to women teachers. It is the universal principle, and that is shown by Paul’s reference to Creation. If it was merely cultural it would stand to reason that some lasting principle can be derived from that command besides prohibition against women teachers in the church. However, none can be found. Based on the immediate context there is no convincing reason not to take the command at face value. One would have to expend great effort in order to explain it away.

Having said that no author writes in a vacuum, Paul did not either. Though the exact situation is unknown to us almost two thousand years later it is probable that some situation in Ephesus and Corinth triggered Paul to lay down God’s codes for church leadership. Perhaps women were usurping authority in the churches and God directed to Paul to instruct the churches more properly. Whatever the original stimulus there is no reason to conclude Paul’s command in this area was only applicable to that culture. Indeed, if Paul were still alive to see the present situation in churches around the world, where the feminism movement so popular in today’s culture has made huge inroads into the church and taken it away from God’s Biblical design, it seems sure that he would once again feel it necessary to give similar commands against women usurping spiritual authority.

3. What does it mean to “be silent”? – The Greek word that is used here for “silence” or “quietness” (depending on the translation) is “hesychia” and does not denote a complete silence or absence of any talking. It is also used in Acts 22:2 and 2 Thessalonians 3:12 and in both instances means “settled down, undisturbed, or unruly”¹⁹. This is what one would expect it to mean based on the English. Thus, the command is not for women to never speak in church, but that she should be subdued and maintain an attitude of submissiveness, while not attempting to control the situation. “Didasko” is the Greek word used for “to teach”, and refers to a condition or process. This word is closely related to “didaskalos”, which is

translated “to be a teacher” and is used consistently to refer to an office of a teacher in the church.

Therefore, based on this word and its use in other passages (cf. Ephesians 4:11), Paul is forbidding women to exercise the same role of teaching in a church that belonged to the church leaders who held that office. “The Greek word for ‘permit’ is used in the NT to refer to allowing someone to do what he desires”. The implication is that although women at that time, and indeed until now, may desire authority in the church and the right to teach men, Paul was prohibiting them from it. The Greek words used in this passage leave little wiggle room and strengthen the complementary position of taking the text literally and straightforwardly.

4. The Bible teaches clear gender role distinctions, but places equal value on man and woman – This and other passages like it clearly support a difference in gender roles. God designed the church to be led by men. The same is true of the family. At the same time every person, male and female has equal value in God’s sight. Men are not better. Women are not inferior. They are different.

A basketball point guard is not necessarily better than the center just because he controls the ball more. In the church and the family God has designed it that each person should use their gift as part of a team for the common good of all (1 Corinthians 12.) Men should use their position of authority in the church to humbly serve those they are shepherding, and never to marginalize, exploit, or abuse women in any way. It is shameful to hear stories of pastors or leaders who have abused this God given responsibility by behaving like a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Their stories should remind us to be alert. At the same time we should remember that Satan always desires to twist what God intends for good, to harm. The solution is not to toss out God’s standards, it is to endeavor by His grace to properly live up to them.

5. One reason given for male headship in the church is God’s creation order – Paul goes all the way back to creation to defend the position he teaches. In other words, this is not a cultural thing. It relates to the very way God designed people. The world today says, “There is no difference between men and women. You can be whatever you want.” This attitude is in a word, “nonsense.” God has made us different. Male and female are different. But there are many other differences. Each person has his own gifting. We are each one like a work of art. God is the artist and we are His paintings. The differences should be celebrated! How much admiration would an artist get who makes six billion exact reproductions of one painting?

6. Another reason given for male headship is the fact that Eve was deceived – Men and women have different strengths and weaknesses. For example, my wife is far more compassionate and merciful than I am. This is good because she can encourage and challenge me when I am too extreme. Together we are better than by ourselves. It is a fact few people would dispute that women tend to be more emotional. And emotions can

sometimes cloud judgment. Paul says that this is one reason for male leadership in the church. Who are we to argue with God's natural design?

7. Women will be saved through childbearing – Women are not powerless! Paul is saying that in some aspects they have more power or “say” than any man. Behind every single powerful man in world history is his mother. Mothers generally spend much more time with their kids than the father. Years are spent training and shaping the next generation. Mozart, Abraham Lincoln, Bill Clinton, and Napoleon each had a mother. Some may have done better jobs than others! A mother who does an amazing job raising her children can have a huge influence on the world. John and Charles Wesley's mother told them the gospel from a young age.

Application: Women should not feel that their role is less important than a man's. Each person has a unique and important role in God's kingdom. A woman should ask, “How can I use my unique gifts and resources to serve God and build His kingdom?”